

John Moss, Colorist

Cheviot and Leicester Crossbreed

Sheep provide clothing and food for man. The warm, fleecy hair that covers the bodies of domestic sheep is made into comfortable wool cloth. Many people enjoy the strong taste of mutton or the milder taste of tender lamb. People in nearly every part of the world raise sheep.

SHEEP are among the most important animals that man has tamed because they provide both food and clothing. Long before man began to write history, shepherds watched the flocks in the fields to guard them against wild animals. Today sheep are raised in all parts of the world. Australia is the world's leading sheep-producing country, raising about one-sixth of the world's sheep. In Australia, there are about 15 sheep for every person. In New Zealand, there are about 20 sheep for every person. Some states in the western United States also have more sheep than people. Sheep yield wool, meat, and leather. They also furnish the raw materials for many byproducts, such as glue, tallow, suet, soap, fertilizer, cosmetics, and the catgut used in stringing tennis rackets.

The Body of the Sheep

Domestic sheep vary greatly in size. The *ewes* (females) of some breeds may weigh as little as 100 pounds (45 kilograms). Other ewes may weigh more than 225 pounds (102 kilograms). The *rams* (males) are larger. Their weight, including a heavy coat of wool, ranges from 150 to 350 pounds (68 to 159 kilograms).

Sheep are different from goats in many ways. They do not have the familiar beard of the billy goat, nor the well-known "goaty" odor. Sheep have a gland between their toes which is not found among the goats. The horns of a ram usually curve outward. In some breeds, both rams and ewes have horns. In other kinds, only the rams have horns, or the breed is hornless.

Sheep walk upon hoofs that are divided into two toes. Their ankles are slim. The upper part of their legs is muscular, helping them to move quickly and easily.

Sheep have no incisor, or cutting, teeth on their upper jaws, though they have eight on their lower jaws. They have six grinding teeth on the back part of each jaw.

Sheep can bite off grass much closer to the ground than cattle can. In fact, where sheep have eaten their fill, there is little plant life left. Most sheep have tails, but these are cut off for reasons of cleanliness.

Sheep live for about 13 years. They begin breeding at the age of about two years, and have young every year after that. The mother carries the young sheep inside her body about five months before it is born.

Wild Sheep

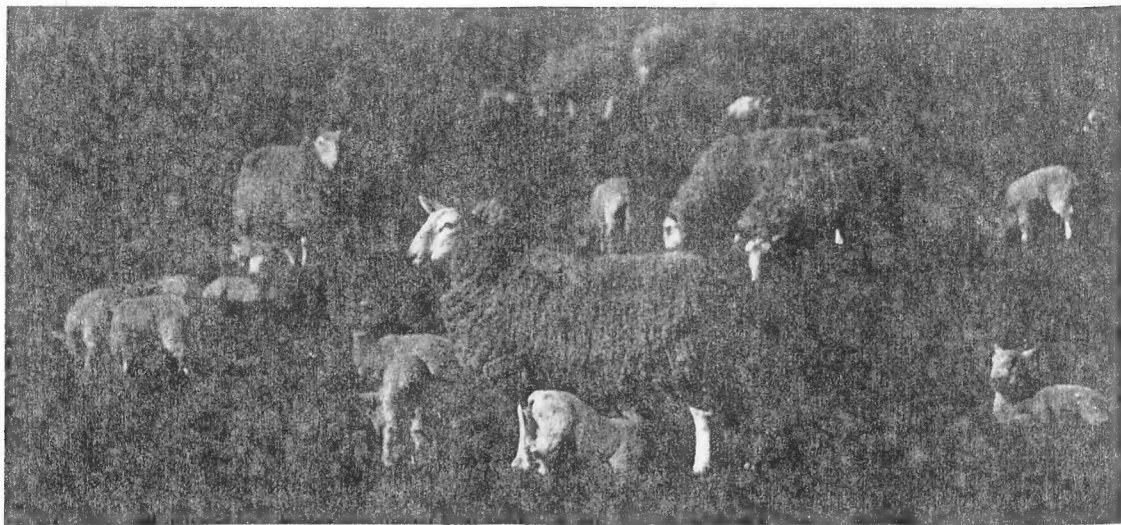
Sheep are supposed to have come originally from the lofty plateaus and mountains of Central Asia. The largest wild sheep, the *argali*, lives in the Altai Mountains of Siberia and Mongolia. The male argali stands 4 feet (1.2 meters) high at the shoulders. His spiral horns are 20 inches (51 centimeters) around.

The great Marco Polo sheep of Asia live on the plateaus of Pamir, the "roof of the world," 3 miles (5 kilometers) above sea level. This sheep was first described by Marco Polo. The Marco Polo sheep is a little smaller than the argali, but it is remarkable for the wide spread of its horns. The *blue sheep*, or *bharal*, which is closely related to the goat, lives in Tibet. About half a dozen other kinds of wild sheep live in Asia.

Wild sheep look much like wild goats. Some kinds of wild sheep are thought to be halfway between sheep and goats. Wild sheep are high-spirited, daring, and self-reliant. They brave the fiercest storms of winter and climb higher than any other animals but mountain goats. Wild sheep live in bands among the mountains and plateaus of the Northern Hemisphere.

All the domestic breeds of sheep are descended from two different kinds of wild sheep. These are the *urial* that lives in Southern Asia, and the *mouflon*, which is the only kind of wild sheep still living in Southern Europe. Both of these sheep probably resemble their original

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